

16. SIGHTINGS OF GOSHAWK *ACCIPITER GENTILIS* IN HINGOLGADH, GUJARAT

The Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* is a rare winter visitor to north India (Ali and Ripley 1983), though it has been recorded as far south as Poona in Maharashtra (Ingalhalikar *et al.* 1987). In Gujarat, there are only two earlier records of the bird from Gir forest and Bhavnagar (Dharmakumarsinhji 1955).

For two consecutive winters now, a single bird was observed at the Hingolghadh forest (Hingolghadh Nature Educational Sanctuary). This forest is located 17 Km east of the town of Jasdán. It is a small scrub forest, one of the few forested areas now left in Saurashtra, and thus serves as an important stopover point for a variety of migrant passerine species, though it has come under increasing human and cattle pressure in the last three years.

We saw a bird on 17 September 1985, and identified it as a female Goshawk from its size and colour. She was seen diving on flocks of Rosy Pastor *Sturnus roseus*. The Rosy Pastors had just arrived; a majority of them were juveniles, and foraging for the ripe berries of *Rhus mysurensis*. A year later, on 5 October 1986, we again saw a single female Goshawk in the same locality, engaged in the same activity as in the previous year. In September—October of 1987 we kept a look—out for the Goshawk,

but the bird did not turn up. There was no mass flowering and fruiting of most of the trees and bushes due to insufficient rains during the preceding monsoon and there were very few Rosy Pastors in the forest.

It is documented for a number of avian raptor species that during southward migration of passerines and other birds, the raptors follow and prey off them. For example, in northern Asia migratory Shaheen Falcon (Barbary Falcon) *Falco peregrinus babylonicus* follow Pintail Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata* and Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus* (Dementiev 1957), while the Merlin *Falco columbaricus* is believed to follow some passerines during both autumn and spring migrations (Cade 1982). From our observations it appears that the Goshawk follows and preys on Rosy Pastor during autumn migration.

PS: A pair of Goshawks were observed in the same area on 16 October 1988 in the company of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*.

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November 12, 1987.

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17. FOOD STORAGE BY BONELLI'S HAWK-EAGLE *HIERAAETUS FASCIATUS*

A pair of Bonelli's Hawk—Eagles nest on a Dalbergia tree on a hill slope at Pashan near Pune, Maharashtra. The same nest has been in use for the last four years. During the last season i.e. late in the winter of 1986—87, two chicks were successfully reared. We observed and recorded the nesting activities during this season.

Two eggs were laid by the female in the third week of December. One hatched on 19 January 1987 and the other one on the following day. We witnessed the hatching of the second egg, which took place at 0845 hrs. The female was present on the nest from dawn, covering the day old chick and the second egg. She looked restless from about 0830 and repeatedly passed her bill under her chest where she had placed the egg. At 0845 hrs she suddenly took off

with the eggshell in her bill. Perching on a tree about 300 m away she dropped the eggshell, preened for five minutes and returned to the nest.

After about 15 minutes, were surprised to see her feeding the chicks. At first we thought that she was picking up the leftovers from the previous kill's meals, but soon we realised that it was an entire kill untouched so far. It had been inside the nest (we hadn't noticed it until then) and we guessed it was a bird the size of a dove. The bird could not be identified at that time. It was obvious, however that it was killed on the previous day since the female did not leave the nest (except to throw away the eggshell) that morning and the male did not turn up.

We found that up to a period of four weeks after the

chicks were born, food was regularly stored, which served as breakfast for the chicks. Prey could be identified several times and consisted of more than 90% birds (mainly mynas, Blue Rock Pigeons, quails, doves and domestic pigeons), occasionally small mammals (species could not be identified) and rarely lizards.

During the first 11 days the male hunted alone and brought food for the female and the chicks. After 12 days both parents started hunting together, leaving the chicks in the nest. In either case hunting started only after 0930 or 1000 hrs. In the chill January mornings, apparently thermals were not available till 0930 hrs. The chicks, however, had their breakfast every morning before 0900 hrs. This was only possible due to stored food. We also watched the eagles in the evening and saw that the last kill of the day was neither eaten nor fed to the chicks.

After the fifth week food was not stored regularly. Both chicks, with their growing appetites, finished practically everything of the day's kills and hardly anything remained to be stored.

The food storage was thus deliberate, consistent and followed a specific pattern. This habit may have served the following purposes.

1. Tenderizing meat: the storage time ranged from 12

to 20 hours, probably sufficient for softening of meat but not enough for development of maggots. We also noted that during the first three weeks the harder and rougher portions like large bones and legs were eaten by the female and tender part fed to the chicks.

2. Eagles are known for their ability to stand prolonged starvation as adults. However, young eagles below four weeks naturally do not have this ability, and they need food early in the morning. Since thermals were not available during this time of the year, hunting was not possible in the early hours, and storing food was obligatory. Later in March, when the chicks were more than five weeks old, and as the weather grew warmer, early hunting was possible. The earliest successful kill was noted at 0835 hrs on 22nd March.

We therefore think that storage of food is an indispensable part of the nesting activities and is vital for the survival of chicks during their younger days.

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18. AVOCET *RECURVIROSTRA AVOCETTA* IN KERALA

On 28 November 1986 at the Kadalundy Estuary, about 20 Km. south of Calicut town, Kerala, where the Kadalundy river discharges into the sea, extensive mudflats are exposed during low tide. From September 1985, we have been making regular weekly observations at the estuary. One of us (L.N.) spotted a single Avocet on the mudflats standing among the many gulls and terns. The bird was observed from 0900 to 1300 hrs.

This species is not included in Salim Ali's *BIRDS OF KERALA* (1969). The *HANDBOOK* Vol. 2 (Compact Edition, 1983, p. 178) says: "Not in Kerala, Andamans and Nicobar Islands or in the Maldives".

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December 1, 1987.

19. BREEDING RECORDS OF CREAMCOLOURED COURSER *CURSORIUS CURSOR CURSOR* (LATHAM) FROM INDIA

About the breeding of the Creamcoloured Courser *Cursorius cursor cursor* (Latham) in the Indian subcontinent, Ali and Ripley (1983) write, "extralimital but some suggestive circumstantial evidence of nesting, sporadically (?) in Bahawalpur and Kutch". Recently, Sharma (1986) in mid-February, found small chicks of this species in the Diyatra region of Bikaner district. On a trip to Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, on 27 July 1987, at about 1830 hrs, we saw two chicks and two adults of the Creamcoloured Courser. The birds were seen in a barren area near Nibha village, between Sam and Sudasari *chowkis* of

the Desert National Park. The chicks were able to fly a short distance. At a later date, we saw one more individual of the courser in a different area of the Park. These two recent breeding records prove that the Creamcoloured Courser is not just a winter visitor to India, as opined by Ali & Ripley (1983) but that it also breeds within our limits.

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August 13, 1987.